

PROJECT APPLICATION FORM – 2012

Applicant: Town of Acton Historic District Commission (HDC) and South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee (SATSAC)

Submission Date: 11/2/11

Applicant's Address, Phone Number and Email

*Historic District Commission
Town of Acton, 472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720
hdc@acton-ma.gov*

*South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee
Town of Acton, 472 Main Street
Acton, MA 01720
satsac@acton-ma.gov*

*Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann, Chair, Historic District Commission
kacerbobachmann@trinitychurchboston.org*

*David Martin, Chair, South Acton Station Advisory Committee
dmartin@marzak.org*

Purpose: Historic Preservation

Town Committee (if applicable): Historic District Commission and South Acton Train Station

Project Name: Landscape to Mitigate Impact on Historic Resources, South Acton Train Station

Project Location/Address: South Acton Commuter Rail Station and Surrounding Area

Amount Requested: \$ 150,000

Project Summary:

As part of the Fitchburg Line Improvements, including a new train station and platform, the MBTA has set aside \$60,000 for all landscaping, which will only cover minimal plantings, basic brushed concrete for the drop-off sidewalk paving and pipe bollards. The HDC and SATSAC jointly seek \$150,000 to augment the MBTA's basic landscaping budget of \$60,000 in order to provide an appropriate amount of trees and other landscaping elements to help blend the station seamlessly into the existing environment and architecture. Enhanced landscaping money will allow more appropriate paving material as well as large trees and perhaps more outdoor seating and decorative bollards. While we cannot return the site to its historic and original condition and aesthetic, we therefore propose mitigating measures; that is, to disguise the platforms through additional landscaping and provide similar pedestrian amenities that will return the site to a condition that will simulate what used to be there while visually protecting and enhancing the site itself. The HDC and SATSAC strongly support funding this project under Historic Preservation, specifically *Preservation of Historic Resources*, for the reasons outlined below.

- The history and nature of the site included flat tracks and a flat platforms (i.e., at grade) and canopies with pedestrian amenities such as sheltered seating. However, due to current Federal Transit Authority requirements platforms must be raised four feet above grade and the MBTA cannot afford pedestrian enhancements. There is no historical precedent for what will be essentially four foot high exposed concrete walls extending 600 feet on the north and south sides of the project site. Plantings will help integrate the platform structures into the landscape, lessening impact on its historic context. Similarly, in the older stations, the entrance would have been paving bricks- not brushed concrete. An alternate surface such as stamped concrete, pavers or similar would increase the historic character of the station.

- The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority and Federal Transit Authority were willing (and did) stop the station design process, and accepted the HDC's premise that the indirect effects on the adjacent historic properties would be significant enough that mitigating measures (including landscaping) and redesign were necessary. The South Acton Commuter Rail product was subject to a Federal Section 106 Review; the HDC and SATSAC have been working very successfully with the MBTA and its consultants to mitigate any adverse affects. Enhanced landscaping was one of the specific recommendations made by the HDC to the Massachusetts Historical Commission as part of the Section 106 review, which they supported. The final step to completing mitigating measures is to enhance the MBTA's basic contribution.
- Although the project technically falls outside the perimeter of the South Acton Historic District created in 1990 under Chapter 40C, the project is immediately adjacent to the District and within visual proximity to three of South Acton's National Register properties (the Faulkner-Jones Homestead 1707, the Jones Tavern 1732, and Exchange Hall 1860) and a group of historic residential properties comprising the Maple and Martin street neighborhood. The new station will directly abut several small-scaled, wood- framed houses located in the Maple and Martin Street neighborhood adjacent to the south platform. Although not technically part of the South Acton historic district, this area is under serious consideration by the HDC for inclusion in the District. The new station and raised platforms will be highly visible from the north due to an exposed parking lot with direct site lines to the edge of the South Acton historic district. The new station and raised platforms will be highly visible from the east while crossing the Route 27 (Main Street) bridge which forms the South Acton historic district boundary whether by vehicle, bicycle or as a pedestrian. Exchange Hall currently characterizes this area.
- The Town of Acton and property owners have devoted considerable CPC and other funds to improving the South Acton village and historic district. For visitors, commuters and many residents this station building and its platforms will serve as a gateway to South Acton and a daily reminder of South Acton's character and identity. In conjunction with Exchange Hall, this station will have a central presence in South Acton, with far larger consequences than its physical form would suggest. It is essential that the best architectural outcome be realized.
- A detailed site plan showing proposed plantings will be submitted at a later date.

Estimated Date for Commencement of Project: 2013

Estimated Date for Completion of Project: 2013-2014